

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09CARACAS86, CHAVEZ'S CAMPAIGN: I AM THE REVOLUTION

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09CARACAS86**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09CARACAS86	2009-01-21 22:02	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Caracas

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/nacion/wikileaks-venezuela-caracas-sucursal-habana/158411-3.aspx>

VZCZCXRO1874  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHCV #0086/01 0212202  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 212202Z JAN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2465  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000086

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2029  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S CAMPAIGN: I AM THE REVOLUTION

REF: A) CARACAS 00048 B) CARACAS 00044

CARACAS 00000086 001.2 OF 002

11. (C) Summary: Chavez has kicked his "Yes" campaign for the February 15 referendum to remove term limits into high gear. His message, which has saturated media from all sides of the political spectrum, is that he is the only leader capable of safeguarding and continuing his "revolutionary" projects. The President is employing his tried-and-true polarizing campaign technique of framing the opposition as dangerous US-backed coup-plotters seeking to topple his government and eliminate his social programs. He is also equating an opposition victory with the onset of political violence, even civil war. Chavez's "Yes" campaign is aimed at motivating and mobilizing his base, which he calculates is larger than the opposition's. End Summary.

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ALL CHAVEZ, ALL THE TIME  
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12. (C) Chavez has dominated the airwaves since announcing his amendment proposal in early December 2008, using nearly daily mandatory "cadena" broadcasts to campaign for the safeguarding of his "revolution." Much of his seven and a half hour annual address to the National Assembly January 13 was dedicated to assuring Venezuelans that the economy is in good shape and will remain so (reftel a). The PSUV has taken out a variety of newspaper advertisements extolling Chavez's alleged successes, with the motto "expand your right to choose." One advertisement reads "ten years ago a leader appeared who began to solve what appeared impossible: health, education, employment, democracy. Can you imagine what Venezuela will be like with ten more years?" At a pro-government forum held by the School of Venezuelan Planning, Chavista commentators argued that the approval of the amendment would actually boost the Venezuelan economy.

13. (C) Chavez has sought to paint the opposition as plotting to overthrow him, a tactic he has used repeatedly in previous campaigns to energize his base. In a half-page January 17 article in the pro-government tabloid Vea, PSUV Vice-President Alberto Muller Rojas echoed Chavez's earlier attacks against several high-profile opposition leaders who he accused of having met in Puerto Rico to plot the overthrow of the government (reftel b). He also claimed that the opposition was directly controlled or associated with "factions external to the country" that seek to destabilize Venezuela. Chavez is also accusing the opposition, particularly university students, of fomenting political violence. His first Alo Presidente of 2009 featured continuous references to opposition coup plotting in Puerto Rico as well as stark warning that a vote against the referendum proposal was tantamount to support for civil war.

14. (C) An ad hoc commission named by the National Electoral Council (CNE) has been tasked with reviewing all campaign material before it is aired on television, which the opposition claims is being used to censor their "No" campaign. The same tactic was employed during the November 2007 referendum campaign. CNE president Tibisay Lucena announced January 16 that the election day would be extended from 4pm to 6pm. National Assembly Vice President Jose Alborno contend that the extra hours would prevent "misunderstandings."

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PETITION DRIVE  
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15. (C) The PSUV has set up "Yes" promotion tents, or "red spots," throughout the country to register signatures in favor of the amendment proposal. As of January 16, the party claimed to have collected almost seven million signatures. While likely an exaggeration, by way of comparison, the PSUV received about 5.5 million votes in the November 2008 state and local elections. AN president Celia Flores announced

January 15 that the number of signatures indicates that "the people once more have chosen the path of the Bolivarian revolution."

16. (C) Chavez has also apparently compelled third-country residents of Venezuela to campaign on his behalf. A Cuban medical doctor who works with the Barrio Adentro social mission told consular officials during a visa interview that she and her mission colleagues had been asked to spend their afternoons going door to door to collect signatures for the referendum. The doctor emphasized that they normally face considerable pressure to see as many patients as possible each day. Their redirected efforts suggest that Chavez is using every resource at his disposal to push for the referendum, placing its success above even the efficacy of the social missions. The government-run Bolivarian News Agency reported January 16 that the food subsidy "Mercal" mission in Barinas State -- where his brother, Adan, is governor -- has been campaigning on behalf of the "Yes" vote. PSUV spokesman Luis Veraza in Barinas pledged that the amendment "would guarantee the continuity of the revolution and all of its social programs."

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CHAVEZ ASKS "TRUE" STUDENT ACTIVISTS TO MARCH  
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17. (C) Chavez has pushed back against the "No" student movement by calling for "true" university activists to take to the streets in favor of the referendum. Via cadena, the President condemned the several hundred students who protested throughout Caracas January 14, showing video of a fire allegedly set by student activists in the Avila region outside of Caracas. He asserted that the protesters largely come from rich families and private universities, and are being used like "cannon fodder" by unnamed forces who are behind a plan to "burn down" Venezuela. Chavez called on the "capitalist" university rectors to reign in the protesters, threatening that "there are laws (against violent protest) and you must respond before them." Nevertheless, standoffs between police and students have resulted in a handful of injuries. Opposition students faced police forces and tear gas as well in a larger march January 20.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Chavez has maintained his almost daily barrage of hours-long cadenas since announcing his amendment proposal in early December. His apparent strategy is to convince voters who might otherwise be uncertain about removing term limits that his continuance in power at least until 2019 is necessary to protect the social missions and the GBRV's claims of improvements in the health and economic sectors. Chavez is also seeking to invigorate his base by reviving accusations of coup-plotting among the opposition, and playing up "attacks" by privileged student activists with the insinuation that Chavez is also the guarantor of peace. The students -- widely perceived as the group with the most legitimacy in Venezuela -- have long been a thorn in Chavez's side. Intimidating them into silence or linking them to violence would have the added benefit of potentially diminishing their credibility with the Venezuelan public. The inflammatory rhetoric exhorting his supporters to "take all actions necessary" is also increasing the risk of widespread violence.

19. (C) Chavez's petition drive of the PSUV faithful could prove useful beyond the February 15 referendum. The numbers, even if exaggerated, could put a damper on potential opposition plans to call for a recall referendum mid-way through Chavez's current administration, which is August 2009. End Comment.

CAULFIELD